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A Marble Head of a Goddess

AN important addition to the Museum's collection of classical sculpture, here illustrated by two photographs, has recently been placed on exhibition in the gallery of the Classical Court. It is a marble head of heroic size from a statue of one of the Greek divinities, the prototype of which must have been executed between the years 460 and 450 B.C. This date, which marks the boundary between the "transitional period" of Greek sculpture and the Periclean age, is indicated by the combination in the work of some archaic severity with much of the ideal grandeur of style which is associated with the art of Pheidias.

The conception of the fifth century sculptor is here preserved for us, not directly, but at second hand, through the medium of a copyist of the Græco-Roman period, perhaps of the first or second century A.D. This is of course true of nearly all the ancient statues which fill the great Museums of Europe,—and especially true of works of the fifth century,—as can be illustrated on a small scale by the collection of marbles in this Museum. The later age of Praxiteles and Skopas is represented here by a number of originals of high quality, notably the Thayer and Bartlett heads and the colossal head of a goddess described in a recent number of the Bulletin. Our collection also includes several original works of the fifth century—the three-sided relief, two or three grave monuments, and two small but precious heads. But the statues in the round by the great masters are necessarily represented only by late copies. Such reproductions vary widely in their fidelity to the lost original, and the majority of them are of inferior artistic merit. The examples which have been included in the Museum collection are compara-

tively few in number, but nearly all are of especial interest for one or another reason. The newly acquired head must be ranked with the best as regards the quality of execution, while from the point of view of the type represented it is the most important of all.

The material is white marble of fine grain. Except for the loss of the tip of the nose and some corrosion of the surface, which has impaired the modelling of the left cheek and the upper lip, the preservation is excellent. The head was worked separately for insertion in a draped statue. This is proved by the cutting of the under surface and by the traces of a garment visible on both shoulders. As is shown by the most complete existing replica, that in the Conservatori Palace in Rome,* the figure was heavily draped in chiton and himation, and stood with the weight on the left leg, the head being turned slightly to its left. It seems probable that the original, like most statues of the fifth century, was of bronze. This is suggested especially by the treatment of the hair, which has been adapted by the copyist to the technique of marble in a manner which is not altogether pleasing when the head is viewed from nearby. But, seen from some distance, as was the case when the statue was erected on its pedestal, the elaborately carved curls form a very effective setting for the face. The features are modelled in the simple, almost schematic style characteristic of the period. The forehead is low and flat, the eyebrows rendered as sharp lines which are continued down the ridge of the nose. The eyes are large, set too nearly on a plane with the brow and with the lids heavily accentuated. The cheeks are full and round, and the chin very heavy. The mouth, with its protruding lower lip, has an individual character and a certain severity of expression which is peculiar to transitional heads, and seems almost like a reaction from the "archaic smile" of the preceding period. Compared with the Conservatori replica the head reproduces less faithfully the bronze technique of the original—especially in the working of the hair and the eyes; yet the whole is executed, not in the hard, mechanical manner of so many Roman copies, but with a delicacy in the modelling of the planes which is suggestive of warmth and color.

If this head stood alone one would be inclined to designate it as Apollo. For the face has a very masculine character, and this god was regularly portrayed with long hair, often worn in a distinctively feminine fashion. As it is, the work affords another illustration of the well-known fact that the sexes were less sharply differentiated in early than in later Greek art. The name of the goddess remains uncertain, though the youthful, rather than matronly, type has suggested that the statue represented Persephone.

The problem of the school and sculptor to whom the work should be assigned can only be

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Purchased; in part by a gift from Mrs. W. Scott Fitz

briefly touched upon here. The unusually heavy proportions of the lower part of the face are found especially in Attic works of the transitional age, and it has been proposed to attribute the statue to Calamies, one of the foremost sculptors of the period. Certain features suggest also that it may have been an early work of Pheidias. The closest parallel to the hairdress is furnished by the head of Demeter on the famous Eleusinian relief, which is acknowledged to be of Pheidian style. The wavy strands along the forehead recall the heavy, snaky tresses seen on numerous Pheidian female heads. The full cheeks and rounded lower jaw are another Pheidian characteristic, illustrated by various heads of Athena which have been connected with him.

Above all, the copyist has succeeded in conveying something of the superhuman quality which, according to the verdict of antiquity, Pheidias more than any of his contemporaries was able to impart to his conceptions of the gods. L. D. C.

To Owners of Old Plate

A Word of Warning

THE value of old plate is seriously diminished by methods of cleaning at present in common use. The removal of the surface by the process known as "buffing" not only destroys the beautiful blue color which alone comes from age and hand-cleaning, but in great measure also the maker's